



Maintaining a CERT Program

Step 1: Communicating With Volunteers

Now that you made the investment in your CERT program, what can you do to keep your current volunteers interested and involved? How can you determine their follow-up training needs, and how can you get them to help you recruit new volunteers? Many of these questions and others may be answered by communicating with the volunteers and partners. This step suggests some ways that you can communicate and some ways for you to use the information you receive.

Communicating with your CERT volunteers is critical.

Frequent communication:

- Helps maintain volunteer interest.
- Makes volunteers feel like they're part of the team.
- Keeps everyone abreast of what's happening in the community and with the CERT program.
- Communicating with volunteers also helps you learn what's important to your teams—what training they need, whether they feel that the program is working for them, and how they believe they can contribute to the community through their CERT efforts

Use Various Communication Mechanisms

Consider a newsletter, email system, or electronic bulletin board for your program. These mechanisms are good for keeping CERT volunteers abreast of:

- Upcoming training activities.
- New CERT classes or teams being formed.
- Refresher training or special training presentations.
- CERT exercises, graduations, or awards being presented.
- Human-interest stories.
- Community safety projects or activities.
- Safety tips for the season.

Creating CERT Websites

If you're really ambitious, you might consider developing a website. Websites not only facilitate communication with your volunteers, but also serve to inform potential volunteers and supporters about CERT's role in the community. If you choose to develop a website, consider these tips:

- Start by creating lists of your committees, volunteers, and sponsors. With their permission, consider including their addresses, email addresses, and home and office telephone numbers.
- Purchase a website domain that everyone can remember.
- Find a local Internet provider who will donate the cost of hosting a website. Be sure to give the website designer and host plenty of credit for their contributions.
- Create an email and fax list of all media, including the names of editors and pertinent information about content and deadlines.

- Include a community response form on the site. This is a great way to generate both good ideas and volunteers!
- Add important local and national web addresses as links on your site. Be sure to include the CERT, FEMA, and NOAA websites and local or community sites.
- Include a list of CERT volunteers who can speak to interested groups on the site.

Establishing Rules for Yourself

Regardless of how you communicate with your members and others, there are some rules that you should establish:

- Be accessible. Set aside time every day to check the message board for comments that come into the site. Respond promptly.
- Do not provide partial information. Wait until you have gathered all of the information you need to provide a complete response. If need be, send an email or make a phone call to explain that you are checking information and will get back with an answer.
- If you commit to a response by a certain date or time, stand by your commitment.

Maintaining a Focus on the "Team"

Teamwork is so important to a successful CERT program that you should always focus communications on teamwork. Use your communications to:

- Share team success stories.
- Announce special projects where volunteers are needed.
- Provide recognition for team efforts.

Rewarding Commitment

Always remember that your success relies on volunteer commitment. Provide recognition wherever possible to those who are committed to your program. Consider awards for hours given, special projects completed, consistent support, etc., as a motivator for your team members.

Periodic Evaluation

Periodic evaluation is important, even if your program has been up and running awhile. Periodic evaluations can:

- Tell you if your volunteers are maintaining interest or if your program is getting stale.
- Provide input to help you identify additional training that would be useful.
- Identify new ways to utilize CERTs.
- Offer new recruiting ideas

See Sample Form Attached:

For additional information on Michigan Citizen Corps and the CERT program contact Michigan Citizen Corps Program Director Gary Zulinski at (517) 241-3867 or zulinskig@michigan.gov

Sample CERT Periodic Evaluation Form

Instructions: Please complete all questions. Your comments are very important!

Neighborhood/Workplace: _____

1. How long have you been active in the CERT program? _____ Years _____ Months

2. How would you rate your current interest level in the CERT program?

☐ High ☐ Moderate ☐ Low

If your current interest level is moderate or low, what types of activities would increase your interest?

3. What types of additional training do you think would be helpful for you to maintain or improve your skills?

4. When would you be most available for additional training?

☐ Weekday evenings ☐ Saturday mornings

Sample CERT Periodic Evaluation Form

5. Has your CERT team been deployed during your period of involvement?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If your team has not been deployed SKIP to question 10.

6. If your team has been deployed, please describe the nature of the deployment?

7. What was your role in the deployment?

8. How confident did you feel in your ability to perform the duties assigned to you during the deployment?

☐ Very confident ☐ Somewhat confident ☐ Not confident

If you felt less than confident about your ability to perform the duties assigned to you, what would improve your confidence level in the future?

9. How would you rate your performance on your last deployment?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Poor

10. If you have other suggestions that you believe would help us to improve the CERT program, please write them in the space below.

Thank you!